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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [PTER](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: ISCI CHAIRMAN HAKIM CONDEMNS MILITARY OPERATION TO  
CDA

REF: A. BAGHDAD 405  
[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 373

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i., Robert S. Ford for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: ISCI Chairman Ammar al-Hakim condemned a recent combined Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) - USF-I operation in Maysan to CDA, arguing that Iraqi Police should have conducted the operation. U.S.-Iraqi relations should be increasingly defined by socio-economic ties, rather than military-to-military cooperation, he said. CDA explained that Iraqi and U.S. defense officials agreed that ISF were not ready to conduct all operations independently, and this joint operation had had Ministry of Defense approval. Hakim believed that the Iraqi Army had been politicized through its insertion in a local governance dispute in Salah ad-Din. Hakim and his brother, ISCI security official Muhsin al-Hakim, argued that operational commands under the PM's authority were acting unconstitutionally and undermining civilian authority. He confirmed that INA and other coalition leaders earlier in the day had agreed to sign an elections code of conduct, to defuse political tensions over the de-Ba'athification crisis and to assure moderation during the campaign. Hakim asserted that his Iraqi National Alliance (INA) was best-poised to form a strong and inclusive government after elections due to its good relationships across the political spectrum. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) COMMENT: Hakim has increasingly come into his own at the helm of the leading party within INA. He was uncompromising in his condemnation of the Maysan operation, making it clear that an ISCI-led government would seek a different paradigm of military cooperation with the United States and a lower profile for U.S. forces in Iraq. Hakim appears to be willing to appease the Sadrist Trend, its coalition partner, during campaign season; still, Hakim openly expressed his frustrations with Muqtada al-Sadr. He clearly trusts the judgement of his brother, Muhsin, who frequently broke into the conversation. Muhsin was much less visible during meetings with his father Abd al-Aziz, now deceased. END COMMENT.

"NO JUSTIFICATION" FOR MAYSAN OPERATION  
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[1](#)3. (C) During his February 17 meeting with Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) Chairman Ammar al-Hakim, CDA regretted the loss of civilian lives during an ISF - USF-I operation on February 11 in Maysan province (ref A). Acknowledging the public outcry and confusion about this incident, CDA assured Hakim that the Maysan raid was a joint operation, and that U.S. forces do not undertake operations without the explicit authorization of the Ministry of Defense. Hakim appreciated CDA's remarks, but was uncompromising in his assertion that there was no justification for an operation of this nature in

Iraq now. Iraq wants strategic relations with the United States, Hakim said, but the relationship must be built increasingly on economic cooperation and investment, rather than military and security cooperation.

¶4. (S) Hakim told CDA that ISF are capable of handling an operation like the one in question, and that Iraqi Police (IP) should have conducted the raid, rather than Iraqi Special Forces in conjunction with USF-I. He believed that an unreasonable use of force terrorized the local community in the middle of the night. Hakim stressed that it would be in the interest of both nations to lower the profile of USF-I in the interest of both nations to lower the profile of USF-I as they continue to enhance the capabilities of ISF. He lamented the lack of information about the operation, claiming that key political leaders like Vice President Adel Abd al-Mahdi (ISCI) and parliamentary Security and Defense Committee Chair Hadi al-Amiri (Badr) had sought clarification after the fact, and that no information was forthcoming either from the Prime Minister's office or the Ministry of Defense. (USF-I NOTE: All post-operation reports are delivered to the Minister of Defense the morning after the event. END USF-I NOTE.)

¶5. (C) CDA told Hakim that while ISF had made tremendous progress in a short period of time, Iraqi and U.S. defense officials agree that they are not ready to undertake all operations independently, and benefited from additional training and support from U.S. forces. He stated that field reports from ISF indicated that shots were fired first from homes in the village where the raid was conducted, which prompted an exchange of fire. Hakim's brother Muhsin (an ISCI security official) told CDA that it would have been helpful for local and national Iraqi officials to have been

briefed on the operation right away to avoid these misunderstandings. Hakim said that the most important lesson from the Maysan operation was the need for better mechanisms to clarify the appropriate role of ISF and USF-I in advance, rather than clarifications after the fact.

¶6. (C) CDA observed that coverage of the Maysan operation on al Furat, ISCI's satellite channel, was provocative and wrongly accused the United States of violating the Security Agreement. He criticized al Furat for jumping to conclusions before the Ministry of Defense's investigation of the civilian deaths was complete. Hakim said he had not seen the reports in question, but claimed that in any case ISCI did not have editorial control of the channel. He told CDA that ISCI did not always approve of U.S.-funded al Hurra's coverage of Iraqi events, which sometimes appeared to be biased against particular groups in Iraq. (COMMENT: This is a common refrain from ISCI officials, who believe that Al Hurra Iraq is skewed toward the secularist political parties. END COMMENT.) CDA noted the United States wants both al Hurra and al Furat to provide objective coverage of facts.

#### MISUSE OF IRAQI ARMY

¶7. (C) Hakim concurred with CDA's assessment that the Iraqi Army had been misused and dangerously politicized by its insertion into the local governance conflict in Salah ad-Din (ref B). Hakim noted that military commanders in the provinces were misusing their considerable resources, consequently undermining governors and civilian government. Hakim told CDA that appropriate roles must be defined and applied for the Iraqi Police and Iraqi Army. He and Muhsin al-Hakim cautioned that the Operational Commands under the Prime Minister's authority were operating in an unconstitutional fashion, reminiscent of a state of emergency or war footing, rather than a civilian-led government in a post-conflict environment. Hakim noted that 400,000 security forces are based in Baghdad alone. CDA said it was important for Iraqis to think about how the Ministry of Defense should be organized in the future. Observing that the next government would have to attain a balance between democracy, security and human rights, Muhsin said that Iraq had to get

beyond relying on strong leaders and focus on building resilient institutions. He added that "strong institutions breed strong leaders and not vice versa."

#### ELECTIONS CODE OF CONDUCT

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¶18. (C) CDA said that the United States was pleased that Iraqi political leaders had agreed to an electoral code of conduct earlier in the day (septel). Observing that it was a necessary step to deescalate the tensions that had developed during the recent de-Ba'athification crisis, Hakim expressed his hope that the code of conduct would remind all political actors that that they had to find a way to cooperate after the election. Playing on similar words in Arabic, Hakim quipped that while political leaders were competitors, they shouldn't be enemies, as they would have to become partners in under a month to form a new government.

¶19. (C) CDA asked Hakim whether MP Baha al-Araji (Sadrist Trend) was intentionally trying to exacerbate sectarian tensions with his recent derogatory remarks about the Caliph Abu Bakr, which had offended many Sunnis. (NOTE: Parliament Speaker Sammarrai'e and the Presidency Council condemned Araji for these remarks on February 15. Araji publicly apologized to Iraqis for his remarks on February 17. END NOTE.) Hakim said Araji's comments were misguided, and failed to acknowledge the sanctity and respect due to all Muslim leaders. He complained about the excessive rhetoric heard on the Sadrist Trend's satellite channel "Baghdad TV."

#### ISCI-SADRIST TREND TENSIONS

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¶10. (C) Reflecting on internal tensions within his Iraqi National Alliance (INA) list, Hakim mentioned the dispute between Muqtada al-Sadr and himself that arose as a result of Hakim's disavowal of armed resistance in Iraq at a Lebanese conference in January (ref C). He joked to CDA that he was in an awkward position, between his coalition partners in the Sadrist Trend and his friends in the United States.

#### GOVERNMENT FORMATION

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¶11. (C) Muhsin asked CDA how he thought ISCI and the INA would fare politically in the upcoming elections. CDA noted that recent polls indicated that the INA and Maliki's State of Law Alliance (SLA) were in a tight competition with one another. Hakim boasted that INA was the coalition in the best position to form a government relatively quickly, because of its excellent relations with other Iraqi entities across the spectrum. He speculated that SLA and Ayad Allawi's Iraqiyya list would have a much more difficult time forming a strong coalition government.

¶12. (C) CDA observed that the current government had faced a number of administrative challenges, not least of which was a combative relationship and lack of coordination between the PM and his cabinet. CDA urged ISCI leaders to think carefully about building an inclusive and harmonious Council of Ministers (COM) in the next government, capable of implementing the GOI's priorities, and overcoming bureaucratic delays that have plagued the current GOI. Hakim said that Maliki and the current GOI had blundered politically and technically. He told CDA that a coalition government requires compromises and political cooperation between parties and interests, which the PM had not been able or willing to undertake. Hakim noted that the PM's team had also erred technically by failing to coordinate its initiatives with the line ministries, and lacked capacity overall. CDA assured Hakim that the United States was ready to continue its technical assistance program to help the GOI overcome its administrative challenges.

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